

WORKPLACE REPORT  
FOR NATIONAL BOSS DAY -- OCTOBER 15, 2010

What Are The Most Important Differences Between High-Performers And Low-Performers?  
High-Performers Refuse To Be Undermanaged!

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This report is based on data from RainmakerThinking, Inc.'s ongoing workplace research conducted since 1993, taken from selected participants in RainmakerThinking, Inc.'s seminars, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, email interviews, and on-line questionnaires, including thousands of individuals from numerous different organizations in the private, public, and non-profit sectors. See background at the end of this report.

## WHEN IT COMES TO ATTITUDES ABOUT THEIR BOSS, WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH PERFORMERS AND LOW PERFORMERS?

### LOW-PERFORMERS TEND BY WIDE MARGINS TO BELIEVE:

- "It is my boss's responsibility to make sure I know exactly what I'm supposed to be doing and exactly how I'm supposed to be doing it."
- "My boss should take primary responsibility for making our working relationship successful."
- "If my boss doesn't give me what I need to be successful, then he/she can't expect me to do a great job."
- "Most people, including me, do their best work when they are left alone to manage themselves."
- "In order to be creative at work, most people, including me, need to be left alone to do things my own way."
- "If someone else is getting special treatment, then I should too."
- "It is fair when managers treat every employee the same."
- "'Making friends' with your boss is smart workplace politics."
- "Discretely handling mistakes without bothering your boss is a good way to avoid trouble."
- "Being 'coached' on your performance is usually bad news."
- "If your boss doesn't require it, you don't need to keep track of your performance in writing."

### HIGH PERFORMERS TEND BY WIDE MARGINS TO BELIEVE:

- "It is MY responsibility to make sure I know exactly what I'm supposed to be doing and exactly how I'm supposed to be doing it."
- "It is MY responsibility to maintain a successful working relationship with my boss."
- "It is MY responsibility to help my boss help me do a great job."
- "Most people, including me, do their best work when they have guidance, direction and support from a more experienced person."
- "If you really want to be creative at work, the first thing you need to know is exactly what is and what is not up to you."
- "If someone else is getting special treatment, then I need to figure out exactly what that person did to earn the special treatment and what exactly I need to do to earn the special treatment I want."
- "Treating everybody the same is totally unfair."
- "The smartest workplace politics is to keep your work relationships focused on the work."
- "The best way to avoid trouble is to immediately come clean about the details of any mistakes or problems as they occur, as part of your regular ongoing on-on-one dialogue about the work with your boss."
- "Helping your boss nitpick at the small mistakes and problems in your work sends a message that you realize that details matter."
- "You owe it to yourself and the organization to keep track of everything you do in writing."

## THE BACK-STORY: THE UNDERMANAGEMENT EPIDEMIC PERSISTS

Nine out of ten employees say they DO NOT get the four basics from their immediate boss on a regular basis (at least once a month):

1. Clearly spelled out and reasonable expectations, including specific guidelines and a concrete timetable.
2. The skills, tools, and resources necessary to meet those expectations or else an acknowledgement that you are being asked to meet those expectations without them.
3. Accurate and honest feedback about your performance as well as course-correcting direction when necessary.
4. The fair quid pro quo--recognition and rewards--in exchange for your performance.

The consequences of undermanagement make the impact of micromanagement look like nothing:

- Unnecessary problems occur.
- Small problems (that could have been solved easily) turn into big problems
- Resources are squandered
- Employees perform tasks/responsibilities the wrong way for longer periods of time
- Low performers hang around causing problems for everyone else (and collecting the same paycheck as everyone else too!)
- High performers get frustrated, lose commitment, and think about leaving
- Employees are not set-up to perform at their best
- Managers spend their management time in all the wrong ways

## BACKGROUND

Since 1993, RainmakerThinking, Inc. has conducted ongoing research on the dynamics of supervisory relationships in the changing workplace. Late in 2002, we began to focus our research on an alarming pattern: We found that a huge preponderance of those in leadership positions, at all levels, were severely "undermanaging" their direct reports on a day to day basis. That is, a great many leaders, managers, and supervisors at all levels in organizations of all shapes and sizes in every industry were not providing employees with what could be considered "the basics of management."

In June 2004, we released a report of our preliminary research on undermanagement, titled THE UNDERMANAGEMENT EPIDEMIC. The research was reported in dozens of news stories, including features in publications ranging from FORTUNE to HR Magazine to the Toronto Star.

Since June 2004, our research has continued and intensified. We've conducted thousands of interviews and hundreds of focus groups including many thousands of participants.

## ABOUT RAINMAKERTHINKING, INC.

RainmakerThinking, Inc. Research has been the source information for eighteen books, hundreds of articles by Bruce Tulgan, and has been cited in thousands of news stories around the world. Bruce Tulgan is the founder and chairman of RainmakerThinking, Inc.. Contact us at [www.rainmakerthinking.com](http://www.rainmakerthinking.com).

### ABOUT BRUCE

Bruce Tulgan is an adviser to business leaders all over the world and a sought-after speaker and seminar leader. He is the founder of RainmakerThinking, Inc., a management training firm. Bruce is the author of the classic *Managing Generation X* as well as the best seller *It's Okay to be the Boss*, and many other books. His work has been the subject of thousands of news stories around the world. He has written pieces for numerous publications, including the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, the *Harvard Business Review*, and *Human Resources*. Bruce also holds a fourth-degree black belt in classical Okinawan Uechi Ryu karate. He lives with his wife, Dr. Debby Applegate, winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Biography for her book *The Most Famous Man in America*. Bruce can be reached by e-mail at [brucet@rainmakerthinking.com](mailto:brucet@rainmakerthinking.com). His complimentary weekly workplace video is available at [www.rainmakerthinking.com](http://www.rainmakerthinking.com).